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Taking the high road: how multi-genre pedagogy promotes genre knowledge and high-road transfer among academic and non-academic genres

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ABSTRACT

How academic writing expertise might transfer across genres and contexts has been an open question in the field of EAP and genre pedagogy for decades. Yet we know little about whether and how genre pedagogy develops academic writers' capacity to transfer their writing expertise beyond the specific genres they have been taught. This is a significant gap considering how academic communication has evolved; today, academics and students are required to communicate their research to a much wider range of audiences and via an ever-evolving suite of genres. In light of this issue, the aim of this study was to design and trial an innovative approach to genre-pedagogy, which we term **Multi-Genre Pedagogy** (MGP). Unlike traditional approaches to teaching academic genres, MGP orients instruction towards writing *across* genres rather than teaching *specific* genres. An MGP task sequence was trialled with 9 social science doctoral students. Crucially, students worked with three different genres – an abstract, a blog post, and a 'News and Views' article – within the same workshop. The dataset comprises students' written texts, classroom audio (analysed as genre-related episodes), and post-workshop interviews. The qualitative analysis revealed that the task sequence promoted high-road transfer, genre specific knowledge and genre awareness. Further, the sequence heightened students' metacognitive awareness of strategies, their perceptions of themselves as writers, and gaps in their genre knowledge. The study advances our understanding of the effects of working with multiple and diverse genres concurrently and underscores the potential of MGP as a model of academic writing instruction.

1. Introduction

> *"It was kind of like pushing my mind off the edge, so that I come out of my comfort zone and think creatively like an author"* (Participant).

This study addresses an important yet open question in academic writing pedagogy: how does writing expertise transfer across

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situations and genres? The field has been aware of this problem for some time. In Swales (1990) highlighted this type of transfer as a "highly significant investigative issue" (p. 233), asking "to what extent and under what conditions skills acquired with one genre are transferable to another" (p. 234). In 2011, Gentil proposed a bi-literacy agenda to investigate the transfer of genre knowledge across languages and cultural contexts. Recently, Cheng (2018) underscored the need to investigate transfer and recontextualisation in connection to genre pedagogy. Despite this question being a longstanding concern, we still know little about whether and how genre pedagogy can provide opportunities for writers to develop the capacity to transfer what they know beyond the specific genres they have been taught.

This question has become increasingly important as academic communication has evolved. Researchers now communicate within and beyond academia, producing interdisciplinary, multilingual, digital, hybrid, and popularised forms of communication (Pérez-Llantada, 2025; Wingrove, 2022a). Preparing doctoral students for this landscape requires more than mastery of individual academic genres (Inouye & McAlpine, 2022). Rather, writers need the ability to adapt their writing to the unfamiliar, equipped with what Swales termed "rhetorical consciousness" (1990, p. 234) and what Johns (2015, p. 116) called "rhetorical flexibility". While academic writing instructors tend to rely on a genre pedagogical approach, much existing practice remains tethered to prototypical fixed-genre models, with little evidence the approach prepares students to transfer knowledge across contexts and genres.

This status quo suggests that the focus of writing instruction should extend beyond the mastery of individual genres to include the ability to adapt writing knowledge across contexts and genres. To explore this idea, we propose an innovative approach which we term **Multi-Genre Pedagogy** (MGP), designed to develop rhetorical flexibility. Rather than orienting instruction towards mastery of *individual* genres, MGP orients instruction towards writing *across* genres. The aim of MGP is therefore to develop adaptable writers capable of transferring writing knowledge across contexts.

We draw on Tardy and colleagues' (2020) conceptualization of writing expertise as genre knowledge. Their model incorporates both genre-specific knowledge (knowledge of subject matter, rhetorical situation, process, and form) and genre awareness, a meta-level understanding of how genres function. As students navigate tasks, metacognitive dimensions come into play so that genre knowledge can be recontextualized. Fundamentally, recontextualisation is a process of what DePalma and Ringer (2011, p. 141) term "adaptive transfer": "The conscious or intuitive process of applying and reshaping learned writing knowledge in new and potentially unfamiliar writing situations" (p.141). Thus, writing expertise is more than the mastery of individual genres and includes a broader genre awareness and the ability to recontextualize writing knowledge across genres.

The present study deliberately targets forms of transfer that require metacognition. Educational research distinguishes between *near* and *far* transfer, referring to the application of knowledge in contexts that closely resemble or significantly differ from the original learning situation (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). Similarly, we can distinguish between *low-road* transfer, in which well-practised knowledge or skills are automatically triggered by situations resembling the original learning context, and *high-road* transfer, which requires the deliberate abstraction and mindful application of knowledge across contexts, which draws upon metacognition (Perkins & Salomon, 1994; Salomon & Perkins, 1989).

This article reports on our iteration of MGP, which requires students to transform an academic abstract into a News and Views article. News and Views is a hybrid scientific outreach genre published in *Nature*, which entails adapting the representation of the research for a different audience, purpose, and rhetorical situation. It is therefore designed to stimulate *high-road* transfer, providing a series of tasks which prompt students to think creatively and flexibly about their academic writing and to transfer their knowledge to a 'far' genre, albeit with similarities in terms of content and rhetorical functions (e.g. reporting findings). The task sequence was implemented during a workshop with social science doctoral students in the United Kingdom. To guide our analysis, we posed the following research questions.

i. To what extent does MGP develop genre-specific knowledge and genre awareness?
ii. To what extent does MGP promote transfer and recontextualisation?
iii. To what extent does MGP promote metacognitive awareness?

We first detail the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Next, we outline our research design and methods, including the specifics of the task sequence and workshop.

2. Theoretical framework

The MGP task sequence design is rooted in theories of genre expertise as agentive, multi-componential, and flexible (Beaufort & Iñesta, 2014; Tardy, 2009; Tardy et al., 2020) and theories of transfer (DePalma & Ringer, 2011; Perkins & Salomon, 1994). In Tardy and colleagues' conceptualization of writing expertise, a key mark of development is the ability to understand overarching connections and variation among genres, and the ability to adapt and recontextualize content, language, and rhetorical features across readers, situations and purposes. In our study, therefore, we aim to promote rhetorical flexibility by promoting both genre-specific knowledge and genre-awareness necessary for recontextualisation (Tardy et al., 2020).

From a cognitive perspective, recontextualisation is fundamentally a phenomenon of transfer. Overall, transfer of learning has been theorized as a key education principle: we want our students to be able to re-use what they learn in other educational contexts and in their lives (Perkins & Salomon, 1994). In this sense, transfer of learning can be seen as one of the complex cognitive skills that students should learn. Transfer has typically been conceptualized as low-road, near transfer (less cognitively demanding), associated with tasks or situations that are similar to each other and somewhat routinized, or high-road, far-transfer, when situations or tasks require high cognitive and metacognitive effort (Barnett & Ceci, 2002; Perkins & Salomon, 1994; Salomon & Perkins, 1989). While both types are

necessary and useful, high-road, far transfer requires learners to conceptualize their knowledge and metacognitively decide what to apply and why. Perkins and Salomon refer to this as "detect-elect and connect" (2012, p. 250) bridges which are necessary for transfer of learning.

In writing, conceptualizations of transfer have also foregrounded adaptability, pointing out that writing transfer is tied to metacognitive dimensions of writing knowledge, especially when writing tasks or genres are new or contextually (and linguistically) different from those previously learned (Gentil, 2011; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). DePalma and Ringer's (2011) seminal conceptualization of adaptive transfer underscores that it is a process of *reshape* rather than *reuse*: a dynamic, adaptive, metacognitive process that is cross-contextual, rhetorical, and transformative. Research on writing transfer has corroborated this conceptualization, underscoring the key role that metacognitive and self-regulatory dynamics play especially in high-road transfer of writing. Roderick (2019), drawing on Zimmerman's sociocognitive theory of self-regulated learning, compared the writing processes of graduate students facing a new and unfamiliar academic genre, and pointed out that successful writers regulate their process by framing problems in terms of potential solutions, by setting ultimate and intermediate goals, and by creating a narrative of progress. Similarly, Driscoll et al. (2019) examined transfer of genre knowledge in college students, underscoring that transfer requires both the development of nuanced genre knowledge and metacognitive awareness of how to use it. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2013) tracked the writing development of a multilingual writer, showing that transfer may occur from any language that the learner perceives as closer to their identity, that they have used recently, or that shares some similarities with the language being used. Notably, this transfer is not necessarily unconscious but rather metacognitive and requires a meta-awareness of genres (Gentil, 2011), their socio-rhetorical dimensions across languages, and the organizational and discoursal patterns that are shareable—or not.

Therefore, our pedagogic approach aimed at promoting high-road, far transfer of learning: the type of cognitive and metacognitive process required for writers to adapt their knowledge of genres, content, and writing strategies across new and unfamiliar tasks.

3. Research design & methods

This qualitative study adopted what we termed a **Multi-Genre Pedagogy** (MGP) approach. The MGP task sequence, outlined below (2.1), requires engagement with three genres: an abstract, a scientific outreach blog, and a News and Views article, a hybrid outreach genre published by *Nature*. These genres were chosen because they share scientific content and rhetorical moves (background, aims, methods, results, and discussion), despite differences in their prominence and positioning. They also differ in length, target different audiences, serve different purposes, and operate within different contexts. Given these characteristics, the task requires students to draw on prior writing knowledge while adapting that knowledge to new rhetorical situations, providing an appropriate context for investigating whether MGP promotes transfer across genres.

The MGP task sequence formed the basis of a voluntary 1.5-day writing workshop in the UK for social science doctoral students. Ethical approval was obtained from the university ethics committee before data collection, and informed consent was obtained from participants. Nine participants took part in the workshop, one participating only in the first two stages of the sequence. Three data sources were collected: post-workshop interviews ($n = 8$), texts written during the workshop (eight individual abstracts; eight News and Views), and classroom audio of collaborative task completion (three recordings, one per group; from stage 2 detailed below). Our data sources complement each other by triangulating data on both the process (via interviews and classroom audio) and the product (written texts). The workshop also included pre-MGP task sequence activities, involving discussion of participants' writing context, disciplinary community, and the network of genres required during their doctoral studies. Author #3 taught the workshop, author #1 collected data, and all authors contributed towards the design of workshop materials.

3.1. The multi-genre task sequence

The task sequence (Fig. 1) draws on the genre-based teaching and learning cycle (Rose & Martin, 2012) and is a new adaptation following the McGrath and colleagues pilot study (2026). It comprises three stages designed to develop genre-specific knowledge, genre awareness, transfer, and metacognitive reflection through a scaffolded progression of activities across the three genres, structured as follows.

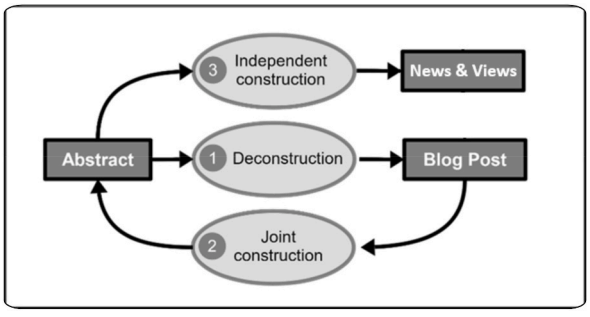

Fig. 1. Overview of the task sequence.

i. **Deconstruction**: Students collaboratively analyse an academic abstract, identifying its intended audience, rhetorical purpose, prototypical five moves, and linguistic features of the academic register.
ii. **Joint construction:** In groups, students deconstruct a blog post and re-write it as an academic abstract. Scaffolded prompts direct attention to the blog's rhetorical moves and the appropriateness of content and language choices. Once written, students compare the three texts: the original blog post, the abstract they have produced, and the authentic research article abstract associated with the blog post, discussing differences and similarities.
iii. **Independent construction:** Students individually write an abstract based on their own research and re-write that as a News and Views article. Aside from being instructed to write the abstract first and then re-write it as a News and Views, this stage was unscaffolded. The students were simply given an email prompt from the editor (Appendix A), simulating how they may be asked to write new genres in future without explicit scaffolding. News and Views samples were provided in class alongside a link in the task prompt, allowing participants to explore further examples.

In the pilot (McGrath et al., 2026), in stage 1 students wrote an abstract which they then re-worked as a blog, thus coming full circle to stages 1 and 2. In the current iteration, the choice to replace the blog writing task with News and Views was made to further stimulate high-road and far transfer. While the News and Views shares some similarities with the blog post, the genre was not previously introduced or analysed in the task sequence. The aim was for students to draw less on pre-established genre-specific knowledge at this stage and therefore to further develop genre awareness, reader awareness, and high-road transfer.

3.2. Data analysis: post-workshop interviews, written texts, and genre-related episodes

Data related to stage three of the task sequence were collected: written texts and post-workshop interviews on writing processes (Appendix B). We also collected audio recordings of stage two (joint construction), analysed as genre-related episodes (GREs), detailed below.

To enhance trustworthiness, interview data were analysed using a collaborative qualitative analysis approach (Richards & Hemphill, 2018). All researchers read and discussed the data together. Initial observations informed collaborative development of a data coding framework, drawing on the pilot study framework, our research questions, and salient themes in the data. Each researcher then annotated an interview individually and provided comments on their annotations. These comments further refined the framework, which Author 1 used to code the entire dataset. A team debriefing session followed to discuss the coding process, resolve interpretive differences, and ensure consistent application of the analytical framework.

Analysis of the textual data proceeded as follows. The dataset comprised 16 texts: eight individual abstracts and eight News and Views articles written from those abstracts. We analysed rhetorical moves and lexicogrammatical features. Rhetorical moves were identified and compared to examine transfer across genres. We then qualitatively compared lexicogrammatical features across genres.

Analysis of GREs (i.e. episodes in which writers discuss the genre they are producing, question their genre use, or correct themselves or others in relation to genre) followed steps similar to those outlined in Hakim (2023). Student interactions during stage 2 of the task sequence were recorded in class and transcribed. In total, three transcripts, one from each group of three students, were analysed. GREs were then coded in relation to prior theory concerning genre knowledge. The codes were refined in response to the data, initially using one transcript to refine the coding scheme before applying that scheme to the others.

4. Results

This section presents results beginning with the interview data, which provide the richest evidence for answering our three research questions concerning the final step of the sequence. We then turn to textual data underpinning this exercise to examine which rhetorical and lexicogrammatical features were recontextualized. Finally, we turn to GREs to examine the affordances of stage 2 of the task sequence, where students co-constructed an abstract from a blog post. As will be seen, these data are unique compared with prior studies on GREs in identifying episodes of transfer and shared metacognition.

Table 1
Interview themes and codes.

Theme	Code
Transfer	Transfer
	↳ Recontextualisation
Metacognitive Awareness	Awareness of strategies
	Awareness of what they don't know
	Awareness of themselves as writers
	↳ Background and identity
Genre Awareness	Genre awareness
	↳ Genre specific knowledge
	↳ Reader awareness

4.1. Post-workshop interviews

Participants were interviewed about their experiences of stage 3 of the task sequence, re-writing their abstract as a News and Views. As shown in Table 1, we identified three themes that aligned with our research questions: (1) genre awareness; (2) transfer; and (3) metacognitive awareness. Note that we frame genre awareness as an overarching category rather than 'genre knowledge', because in analysing the data, genre knowledge as an umbrella concept only increased the complexity of the coding without increasing explanatory power. Further, we place reader awareness under genre awareness because understanding a genre necessarily involves attending to its readers, their presumed knowledge, anticipated reactions, and likely characteristics.

4.1.1. Genre-specific knowledge and genre awareness

Our first research question asked to what extent MGP develops genre-specific knowledge and genre awareness. The development of genre-specific knowledge during a genre-pedagogy workshop is entirely expected, but it nevertheless needs to be established before exploring the more elusive development of genre awareness. We were therefore interested in whether MGP develops genre-specific knowledge as expected, but also whether there was evidence of higher-level genre awareness.

A first important point is that working with multiple genres from different contexts did not appear to compromise the learning of genre-specific knowledge. For example, participants readily referenced the five prototypical rhetorical moves introduced in the workshop when asked to describe an abstract.

1. An academic abstract is just a summary of what your research is about. So, in the body of the summary, you're expected to have like five elements. [P2]
2. I think a strong abstract includes like the main points that we cover, like the moves or definitely something about the methodology, definitely something about the aim, of purpose, something about the participants or who was included and something about the findings. [P3]

Participants also seemed to develop genre-specific knowledge of News and Views, understanding it as a popular/academic hybrid genre, even though we did not conduct any genre analysis tasks on News and Views.

3. So, I think I would describe it as like a combination between an opinion piece and like reporting on new scientific discoveries … it's science for like the general public. [P4]
4. I would probably describe it as just a way of communicating academic knowledge to a non-academic audience … having the same content as a research article but just communicating it in a way that's more accessible to people outside academia. [P3]

It appears therefore, that the MGP approach does not dilute the learning of genre-specific knowledge. We now turn to the question of genre awareness development. Note, genre-specific knowledge was identified as instances where participants articulate knowledge of specific genres *only*. The analytic threshold between genre-specific knowledge and genre awareness is identified as instances where participants make abstractions from or comparisons between genres. By necessity, comparisons involve abstraction beyond individual genres to the distinguishing characteristics or categorisations.

MGP provided opportunities for such comparisons, which illuminated meta-level concepts such as genre rules or constraints.

5. There is a limitation to express yourself the way you feel in academic papers, because some language is not accepted, you have to use some academic language […] That restriction is not here in non-academic papers. [P1]
6. For academic abstracts, there's not much to the backstory because it's not really a story. But for News and Views, there's a backstory. And that's why it's flexible … Yeah, it's easier to write because you're not really confined. [P2]

Importantly, these comparisons led to articulations of how genres function in general.

7 Yeah, in academia we use "et al." but here in the News and Views they say: "Dryer and colleagues' work expands our understanding of …" so, these are all different phrases that I really found completely different from academic writing, but it really helped understand how each genre has different languages that they use. [P5]

Further, when asked about their main takeaways from the workshop, several participants noted that grasping the foundational concept of move structure was a key learning outcome for them.

8. The main one I still remember is the five moves. That's very important for me and I will print out and then stick on bed. [P8]
9. The moves definitely. And thinking about the audience. [P6]

These language choices were often linked to audiences. We therefore frame reader awareness as an inseparable component of genre awareness. Participants noted the challenge of anticipating a general audience's knowledge and anticipating a potential reader's reactions.

10. We had two types of language that we can use, one is an expert language, which only researchers would understand, and the other one is plain language, which the general public can understand. [P5]
11. But when I write the News and Views, I probably would think: "If I say consortia, do I need explain that?" If I do: "How much I should explain?" [P8]

Taken together, these findings suggest that MGP developed genre-specific knowledge of abstracts and News and Views while stimulating broader genre awareness grounded in reader awareness through engagement with and comparison of the genres.

4.1.2. Transfer and metacognitive awareness of strategies

Our second research question concerns the extent to which the task facilitated transfer. Interview data suggest that the task sequence facilitated transfer of both knowledge and writing strategies. However, this transfer was not automatic. Rather, students frequently reported consciously analysing, selecting, adapting, and sometimes rejecting linguistic and rhetorical features from multiple sources. As such, we report both transfer and metacognitive awareness of strategies in this section.

A common strategy was identifying and transferring rhetorical moves from sample texts, often noting their order and positioning.

12. I read the News and Views and found the moves, and I was able to map it out, map it out to say, okay, this answer this question. [P2]
13 What I did, so, in the News and Views we had two samples, I read both of them and I highlighted all the moves inside those News and Views … And I kind of like replicated the moves, but with my own information in it. [P5]
14. One thing I also noticed was that the result, there was a summary almost right on top … So, trying to find something like that in my results that I could then write as a headline finding. [P3]

These transfer reports are confirmed by textual data. For instance, in their News and Views P3 used a rhetorical question as their title, "Why do parents drop out of a therapy to help them co-parent?", which is then answered by a key finding in their opening paragraph: "They [authors] show that their expectations of the programme and their relationships also influence whether they attend all sessions of the therapy." This example provides evidence of transfer-related performance: P3 used a rhetorical move identified in the sample texts in their own News and Views.

These examples concern not only the transfer of linguistic features but also of a strategy. Students reported consciously identifying rhetorical structures in a target genre and adapting them. However, this strategy was not adopted by all students, some instead starting with their abstract and expanding the moves.

15 I don't think I looked at the News and Views and looked at the structure that they'd done […] Because the abstract is so short, that I think I just took everything that I'd said in the abstract, but then expanded on it. [P4]

This participant's text matched this description with one notable exception: they omitted results but framed the methodology as a novel contribution (see section 3.2) and gave a methodological description instead.

Similarly, students reported drawing on prior writing experiences.

16. I pulled things from other writing I've done, the abstract that I wrote for task three, I used quite a bit of that, to then build on. And they, yeah, use things from other writing and then again just cut it down or rephrase some of the sentences to be able to make it better. [P6]
17. Yeah, I need background, I'll put some backgrounds in. So, already have my [PhD confirmation report], so I just base on my [PhD confirmation report], and then just summary some important information to my structure. [P8]

Students also reported actual or considered transfer from genres beyond the task sequence.

18. I was thinking a little bit in terms of like writing a book. Like, you know, the scientific books that are trying to explain topics [P3]
19. Although I felt like I'm writing a newspaper article, but then I didn't draw any language from there though. [P5]
20. So, what I did, I tried to detach myself from the news and magazine articles itself, I tried to reflect on older magazines that are not meant for academia that I have read in the past. [P1]

Interestingly, these transfer choices also reflect strategies, such as thinking in terms of writing a book. These accounts suggest transfer in the form of recontextualisation of genre knowledge, as students considered how resources from prior writing and other genres might be used in the News and Views task. Further, these accounts include decisions about what *not* to transfer, indicating deliberate choices about the appropriateness of different resources. This suggests the task promoted high-road transfer, with students consciously reflecting on genre knowledge and selecting strategies and sources accordingly.

These transfer considerations are fundamentally metacognitive, often mediated by genre and reader awareness.

21. I think I decided to pick […] I mean, okay, one of the factors is to pick information that is much more friendly to people to read. [P2]
22. I have to change certain words and make it plain language, but also make it creative to draw the audience. [P5]

23 I think I just put my potential findings in the beginning. I think that's a way there's a like catching reader's eyes. [P8]
24. That's [technical language] also important to also prove to the audience that it's not just somebody writing up a story […] it shows authority. [P3]

This attention to both accessibility and authority resembles the balance between "credibility and relatability" identified in professional medical ethics writers' blog posts, suggesting that the students were grappling with a rhetorical choice also faced by experienced writers (Yılmaz & Yiğitoğlu-Aptoula, 2025). Further, rather than simply copying rhetorical features, these students reported considering how their choices would affect readers. Practising this kind of metacognitive adaptation may support more durable transfer to future writing contexts, although the present data cannot confirm this outcome.

In answer to our research question, MGP appears to have facilitated transfer of knowledge and strategies, albeit divergently across participants. Students made agentive choices about what to transfer and from where, drawing on a range of considered sources and linguistic features. This process involved metacognitive reflection on strategies. We argue that practice of this kind can help students develop effective transfer strategies when encountering new genres. However, as our data were collected in a single workshop, i.e. not longitudinal, our evidence stops short of establishing developmental change in metacognitive capacity.

4.1.3. Metacognitive awareness

Our final research question concerns the development of metacognitive awareness. Beyond metacognitive awareness of strategies, discussed above, we identified two more kinds: metacognitive awareness of themselves as writers and metacognitive awareness of their gaps in knowledge.

Previously, we noted how students identified different constraints across academic and non-academic genres. Participants' 'natural' writing styles came into contact with these differing constraints, prompting metacognitive reflections on themselves as writers as they discovered which genre, style, or audience they felt most comfortable writing for, and why. Interestingly, our participants expressed differing opinions on which genres and audiences they were more comfortable writing for.

25. I would say it's easier to write for an academic audience, just because I've had practice doing that, and I've done that on a more regular basis, so it just comes more naturally. [P3]
26. I found it a lot easier to write the News and Views. And I just found that I was free writing. [P4]

Despite these differing preferences, the significance of these experiences lies in how they prompted participants to reflect on their habitual writing practices, authorial voice, stylistic choices, and responses to the demands of unfamiliar genres and audiences.

27. I'm being so used to now trying to write in the academic way it was like switching that side of my brain off and saying: "You don't need to write academic, you can just write normal". [P6]
28 I think I find it more easier to communicate my voice in non-academic papers. You know, I am free to write to express myself […] I do not need to modify my voice, express my voice the way I feel. [P1]
29 So, for when I write abstract … it's like to think: "Is it more … Is it very academia? Is it very professional to write that way?" Because I couldn't say "but" for example. But I really like that word. [P8]
30 My voice was completely different, because in academic writing we write like straightforward, here [writing News and Views] I was trying to draw in the reader … And it was not liberating, it was kind of like pushing my mind off the edge, so that I come out of my comfort zone and think creatively like an author. [P5]

We also identified an additional kind of metacognitive awareness concerning the limitations of participants' own knowledge. In some cases, this related to gaps in the genre-specific knowledge required for the task or limited knowledge of the new genre or audience.

31. The five moves talking about the introduction and the background, we talked about […] I may not be able to arrange it in order. [P1]
32. You sort of have an idea of who the audience might be for the abstract. Whereas I wouldn't know who the audience would be, how broad it would be with the News and Views. [P7]
33. So yeah, I'm trying to gain the interest in, so from the non-academia reader, and it's very challenging. So, I don't know how can I make that my topic interesting for them. [P8]

Taken together, in answer to our research question, MGP stimulated multiple types of metacognitive awareness, including reflections on themselves as writers: which genres and audiences they felt more restricted or comfortable writing for, where gaps appeared in their knowledge, and which strategies they could draw upon when transferring to an unfamiliar genre. This demonstrates metacognitive engagement in the task, while leaving open whether students' capacity for such reflection developed over time.

4.2. Textual data: abstracts and News & Views

Our textual data results cover the rhetorical structures and lexicogrammatical features of both genres. Here, we compare students' abstracts with their News and Views and, in consideration of authentic News and Views, evidence is provided for which features they

decided to recontextualize.

4.2.1. Rhetorical structures

Our analysis of the rhetorical move structure of both genres is shown in Fig. 2. Note that two additional codes were required for News & Views to label i.) literature (or prior disciplinary knowledge) outside of the background and ii.) discussion. The students produced a range of abstract types, including research article abstracts (3, 5, & 6), conference abstracts (4), and research proposals for work intended for later stages of their PhDs (1, 2, 7, & 8). For the latter, expected results were coded as results. As shown in Fig. 2, almost all abstracts followed the typical rhetorical move structure of academic abstracts. P7 is an outlier because it is a proposal for an art-project component of their PhD.

To comment on the students' News and Views articles, it is first worth considering the rhetorical structure of authentic News and Views articles. Although we did not conduct a full-scale analysis, the examples provided in class showed the following tendencies: a central finding foregrounded in the title, subheading, or opening paragraph; an extensive background followed by brief aims; a brief mention of methods (sometimes only a sentence); results, interpretation, and significance woven together, often shifting back and forth; and conclusions with wider significance.

Considering this, there is evidence that students transferred rhetorical structures from authentic News and Views. Several students (P3, P5, and P8) foregrounded a key finding early in their News and Views, with P5 and P8 placing it in a subheading beneath the title. This was confirmed by interview data, where P3 stated, “one thing I also noticed was that the result, there was a summary almost right on top … So, trying to find something like that in my results that I could then write as a headline finding”. When asked about their choice of structure, P3 elaborated: “I literally followed the structure of the News and Views […] I like to have an expected structure into which I have to fit in what I want to say”. This shows an initial step in the building of genre awareness and transfer—identifying and replicating moves from the target genre and adapting their content to it.

The weaving of results and discussion was transferred by some students (P1, P2, P3, & P5). For some, this involved literature or disciplinary knowledge rather than results because of the stage of their PhD. The brief methodology was transferred less consistently. At the level of overall rhetorical structure, however, some students' News and Views more closely resembled their abstracts. P6's text, for example, indicated transfer primarily from the abstract through expansion of each move rather than re-ordering to meet the expectations of the target genre.

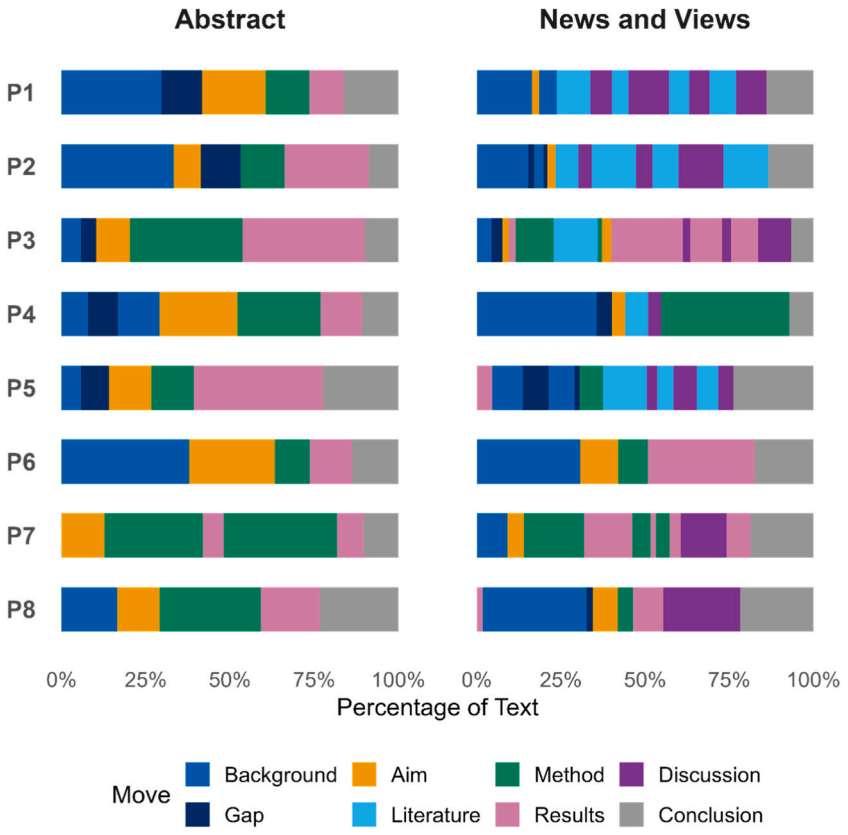

Fig. 2. Rhetorical move sequences of abstracts and News & Views.

4.2.2. Lexicogrammatical features

Alongside rhetorical structures, there is also evidence that students adapted lexicogrammatical features to write their News and Views. These features primarily supported reader engagement through narratives, rhetorical questions, and adaptation in technicality.

Some students introduced narrative or storytelling elements into their News and Views, a key feature of science popularisation (Wingrove, 2022b). For example, P2 opens with: "Well, the stories of Black and Asian women professionals in their destination countries are mostly related to refugees facing humanitarian crisis." P5 likewise opens with creative flair: "once the preserve of freelancers with laptops and big dreams, coworking spaces are now home to corporate employees in search of creativity and agility." This may have been easier for the current case study participants, given their social science backgrounds.

> In terms of engagement features, some students opted to use rhetorical questions. For instance: "How do parents' relationships affect their attendance? […] What motivated parents to take the time out of their lives to attend these sessions?" [P3] and: "What are the lived experiences of migrant women professionals in the global north? […] Then, how are social policies designed to reduce these inequalities?" [P2]. Interview data confirmed that this choice was made in consideration reader awareness: "to make sure I'm carrying the reader along […] So it's to get the reader engaged" [P2]. This evidences adaptive transfer, which differs from simply reproducing observed rhetorical features, as the choice of feature is justified in relation to why it is useful.

A further change was reduced or explained technicality. For instance, in her abstract, P3 writes: "The interviews were transcribed and analysed using framework analysis with the COM-B and Theoretical Domains Framework." Note that the Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation theory of Behaviour is not spelled out here. In contrast, in her News and Views she allocates 140 words explaining the framework in laymen's terms. The choice here was not necessarily to remove technicality, but rather to unpack and explain key terms. This mirrors findings from Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2025), who found that recontextualising research across genres, including to News and Views, involves reducing technical language, explaining it in layman's terms, or removing it altogether, showing that authorial voice can be shaped by assumptions about the readers' knowledge.

In answer to our research questions, our textual data provides evidence of the recontextualisation of both rhetorical moves and lexicogrammatical features from News and Views.

4.3. Genre-related episodes

In this section, we present GRE results from the co-constructed abstract. As a reminder, stage one of the task sequence required students to deconstruct an academic abstract for linguistic features and rhetorical moves. In stage two, students read a scientific blog on misinformation, deconstructed it for rhetorical moves and linguistic features, and re-wrote it as an abstract in small groups. We identified four codes describing genre-related episodes in stage two (Table 2).

Across the groups, formal knowledge was most common, with students discussing the formal features of abstracts, followed by transfer, where they made collaborative decisions about transfer choices. This often involved metacognitive awareness of strategies related to writing processes. Rhetorical knowledge was less common, although this code was reserved for moments when students explicitly verbalised choices in relation to disciplinary communities and social relations. In short, the exercise stimulated discussion of textual features, transfer, and writing strategies.

We begin with an extract that highlights formal knowledge and rhetorical knowledge, both aspects of genre-specific knowledge. In extract 1 participants are discussing the construction of move one of their abstracts.

Extract 1.

P1	I don't know in your journals and areas, but do you normally start with some sort of like statistic or in the background of an abstract?
P2	I normally start with descriptive piece and then maybe a statistic.
P3	Like we explain a situation, what's happening in the background, and then weave in the purpose into it. And we can also write this.
P1	Yeah, that is what I thought.
P3	Figures, yeah.
P2	So I was … Personally I would put like "the habits of social media users are a bigger driver of misinformation spread than individual attributes."

In this extract, rather than immediately discussing concrete linguistic choices, students begin by considering the kind of information to provide, such as a statistic, which P1 links to disciplinary ('journals and areas') conventions. This demonstrates activation of rhetorical knowledge concerning disciplinary expectations. The discussion also includes formal knowledge, with P3 suggesting they explain the background before 'weaving' the purpose into it. Agreement is then reached, and a transfer suggestion is offered: "the

Table 2
Genre-related episode code frequencies.

Code	Frequency
Formal knowledge	39
Transfer	33
Metacognitive awareness of strategies	17
Rhetorical knowledge	9

habits of social media users …". This extract demonstrates how the task requires students to draw on rhetorical and formal knowledge to support transfer choices.

The students' discussion often seemed to concern high-road, metacognitive concerns about writing across contexts. Extract 2 shows a transfer episode where the participants are co-constructing the method move in the abstract.

Extract 2.

P4	So, if we do method, and I put something like "2476 …
P6	Yeah.
P4	"… active Facebook users …"
P5	With the ages as well.
P4	"… age …"
P5	18 to 89.
P4	"… 18 to 89." Which 89-year-old are they getting using Facebook?
P5	[laughs]
[…]	
P4	Yeah. And then they made a decision-making survey. I don't think the "7-min long" is really relevant.
P5	No.
P6	No.
P4	"… and completed a decision making …"

In this extract, note how P4 is reading the text aloud as she writes, with prompts from other participants who are reading the source text. This involves decisions on what to transfer, such as "active Facebook users" and their ages, and what *not* to transfer: "I don't think the '7-min long' is really relevant", which meets agreement from the other participants.

Extract 3.

P1	Say again, so I can type it.
P3	"Which motivates the users to keep posting and sharing", "to attract attention", "sensational eye-catching information", "to attract attention".
P1	"To keep posting and sharing …"
P3	"Sensational, eye-catching information." "Keep posting and sharing sensational and eye-catching information to attract attention." Okay.
P1	One second.
P2	But it's not about misinformation.
P3	Let's vomit and then we'll … [laughing]
P1	Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. [laughing] No, what were you saying? Tell me.
P2	No, no, it's okay.
P1	It's good. But … Like you said, I'm just putting it down. I'll edit it later. Okay, are we done with move one? Should we go to move two?

In extract 3 we see a similar discursive flow to extract 2, with P1 writing with suggestions from others. Strategies are discussed: 'say again, so I can type it', 'Let's vomit' (write everything down without editing), 'Like you said, I'm just putting it down. I'll edit it later'. The task not only requires students to negotiate what to transfer, but also how they will organise their writing processes.

In answer to our research questions, our findings suggest that the co-construction of the abstract provided opportunities for students to activate and negotiate their rhetorical and formal genre-specific knowledge; negotiate transfer and recontextualisation choices; and develop shared metacognition, particularly of writing strategies.

5. Discussion & conclusion

This study investigated whether genre pedagogy can be developed to promote transfer and rhetorical flexibility. To address this overarching question, we trialled an innovative approach, **Multi-Genre Pedagogy**, and posed three research questions pertaining to the extent to which MGP: develops genre awareness and genre-specific knowledge (RQ1); promotes transfer and recontextualisation (RQ2); and promotes metacognition (RQ3).

In answer to RQ1, our interview data suggest that MGP supported the development of genre-specific knowledge and genre awareness through opportunities for comparison and engagement with multiple genres and their linguistic and rhetorical features. Theoretically, our evidence also suggests that the distinction between genre knowledge (Tardy et al., 2020) and genre awareness may be less clear-cut than previously conceptualized, since genre knowledge adds limited explanatory power beyond genre awareness. In answer to RQ2, MGP facilitated transfer of knowledge and strategies. Students made agentive choices about what to transfer and from where, considering a range of sources, linguistic features, and what *not* to transfer. In answer to RQ3, the task sequence stimulated multiple forms of metacognition, including students' reflections on their strategies, their identities as writers, and gaps in their knowledge, albeit with the interview playing a role prompting such reflections. Although in qualitative studies we cannot estimate exactly *how much* transfer was promoted, an encouraging finding is that strategies for deconstructing and repurposing genres transferred to the final unscaffolded task, indicating that students may be better prepared to deconstruct and repurpose new genres after the completion of the workshop. However, this claim is speculative as our data concern a single workshop, rather than longitudinal

analysis; therefore, we stop short of claiming our data provide evidence of long-term durable transfer or lasting developmental change in metacognitive capacity. The textual data underpinning the interviews provided evidence of the recontextualisation of rhetorical moves and lexicogrammatical features.

The abstract co-construction task provided opportunities for students to negotiate and make visible their rhetorical and formal genre-specific knowledge, as well as their choices about transfer and recontextualisation. It also enabled them to develop shared metacognition, particularly in relation to writing strategies. These data triangulate the interview findings with real-time process evidence of the affordances of MGP. We highlight an important contribution: while previous studies on genre-related episodes identified the development of genre knowledge (Hakim, 2023), the current study—requiring students to write across genres—also identifies *transfer*, invoking metacognition.

Pedagogically, EAP practitioners can adapt MGP in different ways in consideration of target genres and transfer distance. Concerning target genres, doctoral students commonly re-purpose their research writing, such as from their thesis to poster presentations, conference presentations, and grant applications. Academic writing courses may incorporate MGP activities replicating these tasks. Genre distance (in terms of rhetorical structures, audiences, lexicogrammatical features, etc.) can also be varied, with greater distances likely more demanding but potentially more beneficial for developing transfer strategies and broader genre awareness. Practitioners may experiment by varying genre 'variables', e.g. audience, purpose, or text structure, to adjust these distances. We challenged students with an example of far transfer to an unfamiliar genre with a new audience, albeit with similar rhetorical functions and academic content. Practitioners may also trial tasks with near, medium, and far distances to provide optimal learning opportunities.

Our results provided evidence of adaptive transfer: the conscious adaptation of knowledge, skills and strategies from one writing situation to another. This conceptualization aligns with definitions of transfer previously advanced by DePalma and Ringer (2011). In our case, the nature of the task sequence stimulated far, high-road transfer to an unfamiliar genre, showing that transfer is metacognitively deliberate, and is mediated by genre awareness (see Negretti, 2021). In other words, genre awareness (including reader awareness, genre-specific knowledge, and the overall understanding of rhetorical moves associated with genres) becomes a heuristic for writing (Cheng, 2018), helping students make deliberate, metacognitive decisions in terms of what to transfer and not, and why.

Theoretically, transfer is conceptualized as a cognitive process necessary for learning (Perkins & Salomon, 1994). Specifically, far transfer is argued to promote to mindful, high-road transfer, which in turn requires learners to develop abstractions of their relevant knowledge. In our case, the knowledge abstraction required for high-road transfer was the students' emergent genre awareness. This awareness allowed them to identify fruitful connections with existing knowledge and previous contextual experiences, decide what to adapt, and make metacognitive decisions about what to transfer and why. Promoting this type of transfer pedagogically is what Perkins and Salomon call "bridging" (1994)—later developed further as the detect-elect-connect technique (2012). In this view, learners need to develop three cognitive bridges: detect a possible link between tasks, elect to explore this link, and connect the previous linked knowledge to the new situation (note that connect can mean developing insightful contrasts, not just similarities) (Perkins & Salomon, 2012). This type of bridging for effective, high-road transfer is what our task sequence seems to have promoted, showing potential for genre pedagogy approaches that aim to go beyond disciplinary or academic writing instruction.

In light of the above, we also framed re-contextualization as a type of transfer. While recontextualisation is a useful term to analyse how knowledge is transformed across situations and purposes from a linguistic and rhetorical angle (Gotti, 2014), we focused on the cognitive and metacognitive dimensions of recontextualisation in this study: in this sense, recontextualisation is clearly a process of transfer. This conceptualization aligns with research that has underscored the key role of metacognition in facilitating writing transfer across genres and situations (Driscoll et al., 2019; Gorzelsky et al., 2016; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2013; Negretti et al., 2023; Wei, 2020), as it allows writers to access their genre and strategic knowledge at an abstract level (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). This conceptualization also aligns with theories of writing expertise and its development.

In this regard our work raises the need to re-examine how genre knowledge and writing expertise are conceptualized in research and in genre pedagogy. Writing expertise as some kind of knowledge construction for oneself and others has been central to both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives: a key characteristic of this expertise is that it is multi-componential, and that it is flexible (Beaufort & Iñesta, 2014; Johns, 2015; Tardy, 2009). Expert writers not only understand genres, but they are also metacognitive, agentive, and agile. This conceptualization aligns with the theory of expertise that distinguishes between the skilfulness needed to produce something efficiently for a specific purpose, characteristic of the routine expert, and the skilfulness required to produce valuable outcomes across different situations and purposes, characteristic of the adaptive expert (Hatano & Inagaki, 1986). Adaptive experts engage in an ongoing exploration and expansion of what they know and thus make adjustments to their approach in each new situation. As academic genres become increasingly multimodal, hybrid, and multilingual both in terms or authors, readers, and purposes, writing expertise needs to orient towards the adaptive kind. This orientation is consistent with the continuity model of scientific communication adopted by Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet (2025), which suggests that the division between specialist and non-specialist communication is a false dichotomy, highlighting instead a fine gradation across genres and audiences. This means helping students to develop the ability to transfer, recontextualize, and metacognitively use genre awareness and strategies across writing situations. In other words: to take the high road.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Peter Wingrove: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Project administration, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Raffaella Negretti:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Lisa McGrath:** Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Christine Feak:** Writing – review & editing,

Supervision, Project administration, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Open access statement

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Generative AI usage statement

No generative artificial intelligence tools were used in the conception, design, conduct, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of this research, or in the drafting, editing, or preparation of this manuscript.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

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